

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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Russia in World Trade Organization Would Benefit U.S., Obama Says

Washington — President Obama says Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) would also benefit the U.S. and the global economy, and adds that U.S. and Russian representatives have been "working intensively" toward that end.

Speaking with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Deauville, France, May 26, Obama said "we are confident that we can get this done," and that Russia's accession to the WTO would provide "a key building block" to expanded economic ties with the United States and create jobs in both countries. Outstanding issues with Russia's bid include intellectual property rights and plant and animal health concerns, especially on poultry and pork.

The president said much of his discussion with the Russian leader had "revolved around economics." He welcomed the establishment of bilateral working groups that will promote innovation and the rule of law.

According to a May 26 White House fact sheet, the innovation working group will be chaired by U.S. Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Robert Hormats and Russian presidential adviser Arkady Dvorkovich, and will focus on enhancing collaboration between the countries by promoting innovation.

The fact sheet said the rule-of-law working group will be chaired by Russian Minister of Justice Aleksandr Konovalov and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and will enhance cooperation between the two justice ministries.

Topics for discussion include judicial assistance in civil cases, corrections, pretrial detention and alternatives to detention, the fact sheet said.

Obama and Medvedev are also seeking to improve travel and contacts between their countries by reaching an agreement to issue multiple-entry business and tourism visas that would be valid for 36 months.

U.S. National Security Council Senior Director Mike McFaul told reporters May 26 that visa liberalization will "enhance our business connections with Russia immensely."

McFaul said the two leaders had discussed European security issues and while McFaul declined to give details, he said the United States "got a new signal on missile defense cooperation."

In a May 26 joint statement with Obama, Medvedev said

Russia welcomes the U.S. decision to designate Doku Umarov as a global terrorist and offer \$5 million for information on his location. Umarov has claimed responsibility for the 2010 Moscow subway bombing and the attack on St. Petersburg-Moscow rail traffic, as well as the January 24 Domodedovo Airport bombing.

CALL FOR ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN TO END CONFLICT

Obama and Medvedev, along with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, issued a joint statement May 26 calling on the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to finalize the basic principles of a peace agreement to resolve their dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh during their summit in June, and warned that further delay "would only call into question the commitment of the sides to reach an agreement."

France, Russia and the United States are co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group, which has led negotiations over Nagorno-Karabakh since a cease-fire was reached in 1994.

The three presidents said any new fighting over the region "would only bring more suffering and devastation" and would receive international condemnation, and they urged leaders in Azerbaijan and Armenia to "prepare their populations for peace, not war."

"Only a negotiated settlement can lead to peace, stability and reconciliation, opening opportunities for regional development and cooperation," the statement said. France, Russia and the United States "are convinced the time has arrived for ... a decisive step towards a peaceful settlement."

Secretary Clinton Sees Another 50 Years of Success for OECD

By MacKenzie C. Babb
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has praised the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's new vision statement, endorsed during the group's 50th anniversary meeting, and says it will "help ensure the organization's next 50 years are as successful as the first 50 years."

In remarks May 26 from OECD headquarters in Paris, Clinton said the statement "lays out a path for the OECD to become an even more effective and inclusive global policy network, bringing high standards, best practices and rigorous peer review to a wider range of economic and social challenges around the world." The document will keep the group's 34 member economies "focused on

promoting sustainable economic growth, creating jobs and spurring innovation.”

The secretary said the group agreed during the May 25–26 talks to a new approach to development “that will better prepare developing countries to move from aid to sustainable and inclusive growth.” She said the OECD will work more closely with developing countries to “share best practices, reduce poverty and widen the circle of prosperity.” Developed countries will partner with developing countries to make reforms in three areas — taxes, transparency and corruption — to enable developing countries to fund more of their own growth.

The meeting also highlighted the “crucial role” of women in driving economic progress. Clinton said the United States strongly supports the OECD’s new gender initiative to advance the education, employment and entrepreneurship of women and girls.

She said ministers “took several steps to keep the OECD at the forefront of good governance and corporate responsibility” by agreeing to new guidelines for multinational companies that include provisions on human rights, resources from conflict zones and Internet freedom.

Clinton said the organization’s “values, standards and hard-won knowledge are increasingly important in a rapidly changing world.”

During remarks at the commemoration of the group’s anniversary in Paris May 25, the secretary called for the group to “widen the circle of economic cooperation.”

“A global economy depends on a global network, and therefore, the OECD must continue to build varied, flexible partnerships in service of the standards we have worked to achieve,” Clinton said.

In addition to representatives from each of the 34 member economies, key partners such as China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa also participated in talks. The 2011 meeting was hosted by the United States and chaired by Clinton, who led the U.S. delegation. She was joined by U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Rajiv Shah, U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk and Austan Goolsbee, chair of President Obama’s Council of Economic Advisers.

Secretary Clinton Calls for More Education for Women and Girls

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told an international conference that educating women and girls helps them substantially contribute to their

communities.

“The evidence shows conclusively that even one extra year of schooling leads to significantly higher wages for women and girls, which allows them to lift up themselves, their families, and contribute to their communities and countries,” Clinton said May 26 at the Paris launch of the UNESCO Global Partnership for Girls’ and Women’s Education.

“We have seen that when women and girls have the opportunity to pursue education, GDP [gross domestic product] grows for entire societies,” she said.

Clinton is the first secretary of state to visit the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

The secretary said the reason for educating women and girls is not only economic.

“Birth rates, HIV infections, incidents of domestic violence, female cutting all decline when education rises,” Clinton told the conference. “Fully one-half of the drop in child mortality achieved between 1970 and 1990 can be attributed to increased education for women and girls.”

At the conference, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the opportunity to acquire knowledge creates a new generation of mothers who raise educated and empowered young women.

“Education sends a message — a message of confidence and hope,” Ban said. “It tells that child, ‘You have a future, what you think matters.’”

According to UNESCO, there are an estimated 39 million girls of lower secondary school age across the world not enrolled in either primary or secondary school. Two-thirds of the world’s 796 million illiterate adults are women, and only about a third of countries have achieved gender parity in secondary school enrolment, UNESCO says.

Clinton said that in the poorest communities, girls who are out of school today are more likely than boys never to start school. This contributes to economic and social stagnation for those communities, she added.

“No society can achieve its full potential when half the population is denied the opportunity to achieve theirs,” Clinton said.

The United States has joined UNESCO in a new study that aims to examine education for women and girls around the world. Clinton said this study will focus on two critical areas: adult literacy and secondary education, which experts believe is the critical juncture in women’s

and girls' education.

U.S. Hails Serbia's Arrest of Ratko Mladić

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — Serbia's arrest of Ratko Mladić shows that those who commit crimes against humanity and genocide will not escape judgment, say President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice.

Obama applauded Serbian President Boris Tadić and his government in a May 26 statement for their "determined efforts to ensure that Mladić was found and that he faces justice."

Mladić, a former Bosnian Serb army commander, has been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague for war crimes, including allegedly ordering the execution of 8,000 unarmed men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995.

"While we will never be able to bring back those who were murdered, Mladić will now have to answer to his victims, and the world, in a court of law," Obama said. "We look forward to his expeditious transfer to The Hague."

The president said that justice for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide is "both a moral imperative and an essential element of stability and peace."

Secretary Clinton praised the news of Mladić's arrest as "a great day for justice in the international system."

"Mladić's arrest serves as a statement to those around the world who would break the law and target innocent civilians: international justice works. If you commit a crime, you will not escape judgment, you will not go free," she said in a May 26 statement.

She added her hope that Serbia's arrest of Mladić will help the country move on, allow it to gain admission into the European Union and "enable Serbia to build a brighter future as part of a whole, free and peaceful Europe."

Ambassador Rice said she hopes that Mladić soon will receive "a full reckoning" for his crimes, and that his arrest can support reconciliation efforts in the Balkans.

"The evidence of Mladić's deliberate cruelty and appalling disrespect for the rules of war and basic standards of decency is overpowering, and we hope he will swiftly receive justice," Rice said in a May 26

statement, adding that the United States also hopes to see Goran Hadžić join Mladić and former Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadžić in The Hague. Hadžić is alleged to have been involved in the forcible removal and murder of thousands of Croats between 1991 and 1993.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner told reporters May 26 that Serbia's arrest of Mladić shows its "seriousness about European integration."

"In a sense it's the turning of a page" for Serbia, which long has been "dealing with the terrible scourge of its past," Toner said.

U.S. Helping Vulnerable Nations Fight Climate Change

By Charlene Porter
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. interests in the world are best served by helping vulnerable countries prepare for adverse effects that climate change may bring, according to U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern.

The diplomat, who has a long history in international negotiations on this issue, appeared before a House of Representatives Foreign Affairs subcommittee May 25 to outline the administration's current policy, with a major meeting of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) approaching at the end of this year.

Stern said a key element of the Obama administration's policy is helping developing nations adopt sustainable energy and environmental policies that may help mitigate the effects of climate change.

"A great many countries around the world, particularly vulnerable ones facing real danger, see climate change as one of the fundamental challenges facing humanity," Stern testified. "Whether you agree or disagree, it is vital to U.S. diplomatic leverage generally and to long-term U.S. interests in the world to be seen as meeting our responsibilities in this regard."

The Obama administration has announced an intent to provide \$1 billion through 2012 to help other nations adapt to climate change, an amount Stern said is only three one-hundredths of 1 percent of the annual budget.

Stern presented that argument to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, chaired by Representative Dana Rohrabacher. The representative expressed concern about the nation's capability to provide significant long-range funding for other nations' development plans when the United States faces its own budget deficits.

As the United States prepares for the UNFCCC meeting

beginning in November, Stern said negotiators will work to design a structure for the so-called Green Fund to help developing nations make adaptations, and to set up a Climate Technology Center and Adaptation Committee that would provide assistance for vulnerable countries, such as island nations with low elevations that are most threatened by the prospect of rising seas.

Climate change science predicts that warmer global temperatures will cause reduced snowfall and melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, resulting in higher sea levels. Shrinking glaciers have already been documented in Greenland and the Arctic. Controversy continues about whether these signs of warming are a long-term trend or a short-term fluctuation in normal climate patterns.

Helping countries beset by disasters brought on by climate change is another goal of the Obama policy, Stern said. "The United States needs to — and always does — stand ready to help countries victimized by such events. It is who we are, and it is in our own interest to do these things."

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